



Monitoring and Evaluation of USAID/Paraguay's MCC Threshold Program – Phase II

FINAL REPORT

May 2012

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The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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ACRONYMS

AAPD	<u>Acquisition and Assistance Policy Directives</u>
ADS	Automated Directives System
AIDAR	Agency for International Development Acquisition Regulation
CO	Contract Officer
COTR	Contract Officer's Technical Representative
DoS	Department of State
DQR	Data Quality Review
dTS	Development & Training Services, Inc.
ES	Evaluation Services
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulations
GOP	Government of Paraguay
HO	Home office
IQC	Indefinite Quantity Contract
IP	Implementing Partners
IT	Information technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MCC	Millennium Challenge Corporation
MOF	Ministry of Finance
MOH	Ministry of Public Health
PoC	Point of Contact
PMT	Project Management Team
QA	Quality assurance
SOW	Scope of Work/Statement of Work
STA	Senior Technical Advisor
TA	Technical assistance
TA/T	Technical assistance/training
TP-II	Threshold Program Phase II
TO	Task Order
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USAID/W	USAID/Washington
US DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
US DOT	U.S. Department of Treasury
WO	Work objectives
WRS	Web-based reporting system

1 OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

In May 2010 USAID/Paraguay contracted Development Training and Services, Inc. (dTS) to provide monitoring and evaluation (M&E) services for the MCC Paraguay Phase II Threshold Program (TP-II) through the Evaluation Services Indefinite Quantity Contract (IQC) mechanism. The resulting task order contract (Contract Number: AID-RAN-I-00-09-00015/AID-526-TO-10-00001) includes an original period of performance of May 19, 2010 to November 19, 2011. The TO contract was subsequently granted no cost extensions through May 25, 2012.

Through the period of performance dTS supported the Government of Paraguay (GOP) in conducting M&E of all six components of the TP-II being implemented by USG agencies and implementing partners (IPs). Specifically, dTS facilitated data collection, conducted data quality reviews (DQR), created a web-based reporting system (WRS), and provided capacity building to GOP and IPs.

This document represents the final report of the project. It provides an overview of the project, its objectives, and activities by work objective. For each work objective the report presents a summary of tasks undertaken, challenges faced, and results.

1.2 Program Description

The purpose of this TO was to assist the GOP and USAID monitor and evaluate activities of all six components of TP-II and the progress toward accomplishing the GOP's higher order goals. This included working in collaboration with and providing support to program implementers in their data collection activities. TP-II implementing mechanisms include an Inter-Agency Agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for implementing components 1 (partially) and 6, a similar agreement with the U.S. Department of Treasury (DOT) for the partial implementation of Component 3 and implementation of Component 4. Components 1 (partially), 2, 3 (partially) and 5 are the responsibility of a U.S. institutional contractor (Casals and Associates) who is in charge of implementing the outreach and citizen participation elements of all six components.

In addition to providing technical support to the TP-II IPs in their data collection, dTS conducted quality reviews of their data, created a central database that tracks program performance, and conducted higher level data collection through focus groups and client surveys.

1.3 Program Objectives

The project was be guided by four program objectives that provided the overall framework for grouping project activities and resources. These project objectives, referred to as Work Objectives (WOs) include:

- Work Objective #1 – Develop Data Management System for TP-II and Train Relevant Partners

- Work Objective #2 – Technical Assistance for TP-II Implementing Partners and the GoP
- Work Objective #3 – Conduct Data Quality Reviews (DQRs) of Implementer’s Data
- Work Objective #4 – Conduct Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

1.4 The Team

To implement this TO dTS employed a virtual office and team collaboration model whereby the local team and the US based team communicated primarily through emails and phone calls, with two in person team meetings. Early on in the project the US based and Paraguayan team met to establish the overall project work plan, communication processes, work flow, and structure. The dedication of the team to ensuring responsiveness to USAID, IPs, and each other enabled this model to be successful.

The Key Personnel identified for this TO included Supervisory M&E Specialist, Dr. Mitchell Seligson and M&E Specialist, Maria Teresa Caceres. Dr. Seligson and Ms. Caceres worked collaboratively to achieve results for each work objective. Dr. Seligson worked primarily from his home base in the U.S., while Ms. Caceres represented the project on the ground in Paraguay and served as the main point of contact for USAID and IPs. With the guidance and technical direction of Dr. Seligson, Ms. Caceres was responsible for coordinating and driving all project activities including securing additional resources as needed. Dr. Seligson made two targeted trips to Paraguay to coincide with key project activities and meet with USAID, IPs and Ms. Caceres. At all other times, he and Ms. Caceres communicated via skype, teleconferences, and email as needed.

Our M&E team was aided by our competent IT team comprised of expatriate Adrian Lauf and Paraguayan Victor Diaz Ovando. Adrian Lauf provided technical oversight and guidance for the design, testing and launch of the web-based reporting system. As with Dr. Seligson, Mr. Lauf worked primarily from his home base with an initial trip to Paraguay to coincide with project start up activities. Mr. Lauf worked collaboratively with Victor Diaz Ovando. Mr. Diaz coordinated and managed the development of the WRS from Paraguay.

2. SUMMARY OF WORK OBJECTIVE (WO) ACTIVITIES

This section of the report presents an overview of project activities against each WO.

2.1 WO#1: Develop Data Management System for TP-II and Train Relevant Partners

The goal of this WO was to design, test, and fully launch a user-friendly web based system for the M&E staff of the IPs to enter their data. This WRS was designed to gather and manage the data collected and develop standardized and customized reports that will assist USAID/Paraguay project managers in monitoring their portfolio.

To achieve this goal, in the initial months dTS designed, developed, tested, and began implementation of a WRS to gather and manage data collected by the IPs. dTS was responsible for storing and managing the WRS. Our expatriate IT Expert, Mr. Lauf, led the system design

and development process. Mr. Lauf worked with our local IT Expert, Victor Diaz Ovando, the M&E staff of the IPs and USAID to create and test a user-friendly web-based system. Prior to his arrival in Paraguay, Mr. Lauf reviewed the available M&E plans and documents of the IPs and began work on the data system design. During his initial visit, Mr. Lauf equipped Mr. Ovando and Ms. Caceres with the skills to train USAID and the IPs in the system's use. Mr. Ovando was responsible for troubleshooting the system and providing on-going refresher training and support to system users at USAID and the IPs.

As part of the development process, dTS met with all IPs and agreed on the proper documentation to back up progress and compliance with indicators. The dTS core team worked closely with USAID/Paraguay and IPs to finalize the Indicator Frameworks across IPs. The launch of the WRS had to be rescheduled because the technical meetings had to be postponed. Once the indicator framework and design was finalized dTS developed and distributed the following documentation:

- System Description: Functional description of the system, including its purpose, data sources, users, and software platform.
- System Architecture: System architectural diagrams, data models, system logic flow charts, and interfaces with other systems.
- System User Manual: Usage instructions, descriptions of feature sets, frequently asked questions, and troubleshooting guidance.
- Technical Documentation: Data dictionaries, data table documentation, file relations, database software procedures, internal code documentation, software problem reports, menu map, and directory information.
- System Administration Guide: Version and release notes, maintenance procedures, data import/export instructions, electronic data transfer specifications, and backup and recovery processes.

The system design was presented to USAID/Paraguay as a prototype for review. Once the design was approved, the dTS Team proceeded with the programming and launch of the WRS. dTS provided technical support to USAID and the IPs during the annual, semi-annual and quarterly reporting periods and at other times as needs required.

The outputs/products associated with this WO include:

- Finalized indicator matrix
- Design and development of the web based application in two languages (English and Spanish).
- Information for WRS installed on the computers of IP focal points as identified by USAID and IPs.
- Final assembly and delivery of the WRs to USAID containing the database and attachments supplied by the IPs and certifiers for the purposes of post-project audit.

2.2 WO#2: Technical Assistance for TP-II Implementing Partners

The goal of this work objective is to establish robust performance management and data collections systems for TP-II IPs.

To achieve this goal dTS provided technical assistance and training as needed to TP-II IPs. Our team provided assistance to the IP staff who input or make use of the WRS, and to USAID and GOP staff that retrieve and interpret the data. Most TA was conducted face-to-face, individually or in small groups by our resident M&E specialist Dr. Caceres, and our resident IT expert, Mr. Ovando.

The precise type of training and technical assistance (T/TA) was driven by the needs of the IPs. The following are examples of areas that dTS directed T/TA:

- Collection of indicator data: This included the specification and operational definition of appropriate output and outcome performance indicators, collection of valid and reliable data, and internal quality control techniques appropriate for use by IPs.
- Inputting indicator data into the WRS: This included refresher sessions and training of new system users, reinforcement of the IPs' need to maintain the data input schedule agreed upon with USAID, and techniques for inputting various forms of data (i.e., quantitative, qualitative ratings, and narratives).
- Accessing data for monitoring and evaluative purposes in standardized and customized formats: This included assistance in preparing and interpreting system generated reports.

The outputs/products associated with this WO was on going technical support and advice for IPs and USAID.

2.3 WO#3: Conduct Data Quality Reviews (DQRs) of Implementer's Data

The goal of this work objective is to improve the quality of IP reported data and their data collection tools. To achieve this goal, dTS conducted DQRs of the indicator data used by each IP.

The data quality assurance (QA) process involved both statistical and qualitative analyses. Our experts:

- conducted periodic monitoring of the data entry in the system
- assessed the consistency, validity, and relevance of the input data for each indicator
- conducted pre certification and periodic certification of the validity, reliability, consistency, data quality, and timeliness of reports and recommendations for each respective performance indicator and results
- assessed data from the perspective of internal consistency, consistency over time, and the plausibility of measurement system outputs when compared to external sources of information;

The main challenge of this goal was the IP's use of the monitoring system in a Web environment and commitment of the implementers, considering that the system is new.

The output/products associated with this WO include:

- pre certification and certification of all indicators reported in the WRS
- Data Quality Report based on the analysis of two key variables: 1) quality proof and 2) report timing based on the amount and frequency of report submissions.

2.4 WO#4: Conduct Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative analysis is based entirely on a *post hoc* evaluation of the “Umbral II” project and is not an impact evaluation. An impact evaluation would have consisted of a baseline survey and appropriate control groups. USAID, however, instructed dTS to perform this post-hoc evaluation, which reveals important conclusions about various aspects of the project. However because of the absence of a baseline and control groups, the evaluation cannot be considered definitive.

In close consultation, USAID/Paraguay and the dTS Team agreed to carry out surveys in four key areas: 1) the judiciary, 2) customs, 3) health, and 4) the police. In each area, various subgroups were determined based on suggestions of USAID/Paraguay. CIRD, a local Paraguayan organization was contracted by dTS for data gathering, verification, and submission of final data sets to dTS. Accordingly, CIRD produced the following deliverables:

1. Administration of 518 interviews;
2. Data verification
3. Delivery of data sets to dTS
4. Field report

To inform the analysis, the dTS Team:

- Prepared survey instruments for the administration
- Held regular meetings with USAID to provide feedback on progress and difficulties in the process of collecting the information
- Obtained survey information for the qualitative assessment through interviews and focus groups qualified concerning linked to endpoints.
- Implementation of the satisfaction survey of end users of the services defined

The main challenge of this WO was obtaining interviews with some contacts identified by USAID/Paraguay as part of the survey group. In some instances getting access to the right interviewees took longer than anticipated, thus slowing down the pace of data collection and analysis.

The output/product associated with this WO includes:

- Quantitative and Qualitative Data Assessment Report.

3. SUMMARY

This TO has demonstrated that a web based platform can be designed with an interactive user friendly interface to facilitate partner reporting. The WRS achieved a significant level of reporting and proved to be a useful tool for IPs and USAID.

With the culmination of the TP II program, dTS has turned over the final version of the M&E system to USAID/Paraguay along with two CD Roms that contain the data obtained through the WRS.